Jean had made. This artificer was so ungrateful & greedy of his skill that he would never impart it to any man, not even to his son, so it is said. The windows he made with such art that the Sun, however brightly he shines, can in no wise pierce them with his rays; which is a very fine thing, and without parallel. Had he but been willing to teach this art, a thousand other men since him would have brought forth many fair and goodly works, which have not been made, nor ever will be. Would God that the inventor of gunpowder had done the like, and had died without hands and with closed mouth: hundreds of thousands of men might have lived longer, who have been most cruelly slain. Such are the execrable kinds of knowledge that should not be taught; but the goodly and excellent ones should be proclaimed, to the end that every man may occupy himself therein and strive to do good work. Albert Dürer, the noble German painter, is greatly to be praised, who has so well set forth his art of painting by drawing the figures of Geometry, Fortifications, and the proportions of the human body. He is worthy to be held in immortal memory.[1]

1. *These numerical references are to longer notes by the translator, placed at the end of this volume.*

Let us not then be unmindful to teach & say freely what may be of profit, and let us with good heart give pleasure to all who live, even as we would that they should do to us. A pearl buried in dung is lost and useless; but when it is set in gold, be it alone or with other precious stones, it is much more fitly disposed and to the liking of the men who have it before their eyes. And so, being unwilling that our Attic Letters, in their true proportion, should be altogether unknown, I have drawn them all for you by number and measure, to the end that you may use them at your good pleasure, and may make of them as many large and as many small as shall seem well and good to you, and this whilst keeping always the number of points and curves required for each of them.

Here I would fain beg & admonish you that when you shall wish to use Attic Letters, or Greek, or others, in mottoes, in sentences, or otherwise, you place and write them in Tablets, or in open spaces, to the end that each letter be seen and stand in a straight line, in full face, and in good order. I see some who place them in Scrolls, wherein very often a syllable finds itself divided into parts more than an ell asunder, which is contrary to the rules of Grammar. *Item,* some letters lie crosswise, as it were, and others have the feet askew, which is contrary to the design of Nature. The nature of Letters, which are made on the pattern of

the human body, is to stand in their requisite & proper aspect, upright, and intact. But if somebody should reply to me that on a piece of gold, silver, copper, or some other substance, there are letters whereof some, with respect to others, are found to have their feet out of line, or askew, I would answer courteously that it is well done, & that one can turn between his fingers the said piece of gold, or other piece, so as to see each letter straightly and in full face. But in pictures, in windows, in tapestries, on walls, & in many other places, one cannot turn the letters save by turning the whole surface whereon they are placed, for which reason it is fitting that they be planted closely there and written on a straight line, one after another. These would fain excuse themselves & say that Scrolls serve to fill the blank spaces. Saving their honour, they serve only haste, & the cause of this misuse is the bands of chaplets & crowns of leaves, branches, and flowers, which the ancients brought into their feasts to flit about here and there and to give charm to the said feasts. He who would write in Scrolls should not write lengthwise, but across; for should one desire to write but three or four verses lengthwise, the scrolls must needs be longer than from here to the Isles of Molucca, & especially if he would write in large letters. The fashion of writing in scrolls is a great abuse in many ways, & chiefly in this, that some write one and the same word or syllable half within the scroll and the other half on top of it.

It is great folly to try to do something without seeking out the reason. The device of writing in scrolls comes from far distant and almost unknown antiquity, but none the less I will tell it to you. It came from the ancient Lacedæmonians, who in time of war had two truncheons made, of exactly the same length & thickness, & gave one to the Prince who was going to war, and kept the other until they should have occasion to write to him in secret. And when they wrote to him they took a strip of parchment, or leather, or some similar thing, long and narrow like a girdle, & wrapped it edge to edge around the length of the truncheon which they had kept; then wrote upon their parchment along and around their said truncheon in such wise that the greater part of the letters were a half or a third or very little way over either edge and place of jointure of their said parchment; then they unrolled it & sent it all unrolled to their said Prince, who, as soon as he received it, placed it around his truncheon, and thereupon, because the two truncheons were of the same size, all the letters fitted together exactly, as when they were